



**Wyoming
Department of Agriculture**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wyoming Agriculture Officials Examine Animal Harvesting Options

CHEYENNE (May 7, 2009) - Recently, Wyoming Department of Agriculture officials traveled to Hot Springs, South Dakota to examine the feasibility of a Mobile Harvest Unit for use in the state of Wyoming.

In Wyoming, ranchers have very few in-state animal harvest options. There are presently 12 state inspected slaughter plants and 20 state inspected meat processing plants in Wyoming. Most of these plants are located in a band across the state from the NW to the SE with a couple plants in the SW but no state inspected slaughter plants in the NE portion of the state. Additionally, there are currently no federally inspected slaughter facilities in Wyoming.

“We are always looking for ways to make agriculture in the state stronger,” said Jason Fearneyhough, Deputy Director of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. “This trip to see the mobile harvesting unit is the first step towards providing another viable processing option for ranchers that makes economic and practical sense.”

Wild Idea Buffalo Company operates the mobile harvest unit that currently services ranchers in western South Dakota. The unit is a self-contained harvesting unit in a 40-45 foot trailer, which is divided into the slaughter room, refrigerated storage area and mechanical room where the generator, air compressor, hot water, restroom and sterilizing fluids are stored. Typically, the unit has a staff of four individuals and can process 10 to 20 animals per day, depending on the type and size of the animal.

The unit is comprised of an over-the-road tractor/trailer unit and can be taken directly to the ranch to be used. Currently, ranchers in the northeast portion of Wyoming have to transport livestock hundreds of miles in order to be slaughtered and processed which can take a toll on the ranchers and the animals.

“There are great expenses associated with the transportation of livestock for processing” said Fearneyhough. “This mobile harvest unit lowers the cost to the producer of slaughtering by eliminating the transport of live animals, while providing a better product because there is less stress on the animal.”

One major reason for the trip was to check to see if the trailer would meet state inspection standards for meat processing plants.

“A major priority of the WDA is to ensure that meat slaughter and processing plants are inspected and meet USDA requirements in order to protect the food supply in Wyoming,” said Dean Finkenbinder, Consumer Health Services Manager. “We were very impressed with the unit from a food safety standpoint and with a few modifications it could work in Wyoming.”

If the WDA determines that the Mobile Harvest Unit is a viable option for Wyoming, it could provide a convenient, certified and cost effective way for ranchers to harvest livestock in the state of Wyoming. The WDA is currently weighing the options and will look further into opportunities a mobile slaughter facility would provide for Wyoming agriculture in the coming weeks.